

34
*The GRAVE, the House appointed for all
living.*

A
S E R M O N

On J O B x x x. --- 23.

Preach'd at the FUNERAL

O F

Mr. James Blunt, of Frome

On THURSDAY the 19th of *August*, 1749.

By J O H N B O W D E N.

*Publiſh'd at the Deſire of his Relations, and
Others that heard it.*

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ESTER MON

On 10th May 1793

At the Funeral

Mr. James Blount of London

On Thursday the 10th of May, 1793

BY JOHN BOWDEN

Printed at the Office of the Religious, and
Other, that is to say, in

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W. BATH
The Four Seasons



J O B x x x. --- 23.

For I know thou wilt bring me to death, and to the House appointed for all living.



THESE are the Words of Job, the most miserable and yet the most happy of Mortals. The most miserable, if we respect the Losses he sustain'd, and the Torments he endured. The most happy however, considering the Uprightness of his Heart, the Perfection of his Virtue, how dear he was to God, how conscious of his Integrity, how assured of a glorious Resurrection and blessed Immortality. Among other Consolations under his Misery, this was one, that he knew it would be but short, that if not before,

Death e'erlong would bring a welcome Release. *For I know that thou wilt bring me to death, &c.* The House the common Sanctuary thou hast prepared for all Mankind, and therefore I know thou wilt shortly send Death to fetch me thither, there, where thy afflicting Hand will not pursue me, and where all my Sufferings and Complaints will be for ever ended.

I shall not stand here to enquire how justly, and on how many Accounts, the Grave may be compared to an House; tho' there mayn't be so much Wit shewn in it, I think it may be of more use to take Notice how piously Job ascribes the disposal of himself, and all Mankind to God. He does not barely say, I know that I and all Mankind must die, and take up our Abode in the Grave, but he ascribes his own and others Fate to Almighty God. 'Tis thy Providence has ordained, that the Earth from whence Man sprung, shall be the Tomb to receive them again. Thus piously, I say, and no less truly, Job speaks. For is it not in Him we live and move, and have our Being? Is it not he that first breathed

into;

into Man's Nostrils the vital Flame, and who constantly maintains it? can any Thing extinguish it without his Leave? can any Thing retain it when he is pleas'd to call for it? Certainly we are in God's Hands, as the Clay is in the Hands of the Potter, nor can we any more go out of the World, than we could at first come into it, without a Commission from his Providence.

But I shall now consider Death,

I. As it relates to All in general.

II. As it relates to the Righteous and the Wicked respectively.

III. Apply.

I. I shall consider Death with respect to All in general, and thus consider'd it implies the following Things,

1. The Dissolution of Man's Frame.

2. The taking a final Leave of all these Wordly Things.

3. The entering on a new and unknown World.

4. The Passage to Judgment, and the being plac'd in an unchangeable Condition.

1. Death implies the Dissolution of Man's Frame, a breaking the Union of Soul and Body ; this indeed is the primary Notion of Death. — Death breaks the Springs of Life ; extinguishes the Spirits ; stagnates the Blood ; puts an End to all vital and animal Action ; crumbles us into Dust, and dissolves the close knit Union between Body and Soul. And now let our Meditations stay a little here ; let us think what a great and surprizing Change this must be ! for one that was just now breathing and living, capable of Talking and Conversing with us, to have his Breath stop'd, his Life vanish, his Countenance turn wan and pale ; to be able to talk no more to us, nor look any more on us ; to become senseless as a Stone ; deform'd and frightful to behold ; unfit to stay above Ground ; a Lump of Rottenness, the Spoil of the Grave, and Food for Worms. *What*

a surprizing Change is this? Surprizing to behold in others, but more to experience it in ourselves, and yet how soon must all we experience it! how soon must the Union betwixt Soul and Body be dissolved? how soon must these Frames crumble into Dust? All here present, nay, all Mankind, may with Job say, The Grave is mine House: I have made my Bed in the Darkness. I have said to Corruption, thou art my Father; and to the Worm, thou art my Mother and my Sister,—JOB. xvii. 13, 14.

2. Death, respecting all Mankind, imply's the taking a final Leave of these Worldly Things: Death severs us wholly from them; all that we enjoy, and all that we endure, all that we either hope or fear in this World, will then vanish from us. As for the good Things we enjoy here, as Riches, Honours, sensual Pleasures, Friends, Relations, the Means of Grace, &c. they are no more. — Death levels the Rich with the Poor, the Honourable with the Base: It blasts Men's Pleasures; Snatches them from the Arms of their Friends; bury's all their Projects

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in the Grave; puts an end to Sabbath's and Ordinances of Religion, and they no longer hear that gladsome Sound. — As to the Evils that attend us here, Death also puts an End to these, Farewell Pain, Want, Persecution and Disgrace; we shall be no more injur'd by Men, nor rack'd by Diseases, nor pinch'd with Hunger and Cold. The Grave bury's all these Troubles we are subject to in this World; there, as Job says, *The Wicked cease from Troubling; there the Weary be at Rest; there the Prisoners rest together, they hear not the Voice of the Oppressor; the small and great are there, and the Servant is free from his Master.*—JOB iii. 17, 18, 19.

3. Death also imply's an Entrance on a new and for the most part an unknown State. Death is not a ceasing to be, nor a ceasing to perceive; 'tis true we no longer perceive as we did here; our Bodily Organs are dissolv'd, and we are separated from all these Wordly Things; but, Man has a Soul, a Spiritual part that survives his Funeral, that lives when the Body is moulder'd to Dust,

lives

lives in another Place, tho' no longer here. When the Body returns to the Earth as it was, the Spirit returns to God who gave it, goes into the World of Spirits, has a new and amazing Scene of Things open'd to its view; we cease not to live, but only to live as we did before; we see not through these Eyes, nor hear through these Ears, perceive not Things by the Means of the Body, as is the Manner here; but still there is Life and Perception remaining, as the Scripture asserts, so Reason does not at all oppose, but rather confirms it; For why should we think the whole Man dies with the Body? Is any thing more distinct than our Ideas of Body and Soul, of Thought and Matter? Why then should any one think they are the same, or subject to the same Fate? Don't we often see that when the Body is weak and infirm, the Soul's Faculties are as strong or stronger than ever? and is not this a Sign that the Soul is distinct from it, and may live without it? Is the Body any more than the Organ, the Instrument of the Soul? And mayn't the Musician live without his Instrument? Indeed there seems to be no Connec-

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tion between the Life of the Body and that of the Soul: and that the Soul rather thinks in the Body than out of it, is only because God for a Time has ordain'd it to be so. The Soul will not only think, but think after a better rate, when separated from the Body, which since the Fall is so deprav'd and disorder'd, that it rather clogs and clouds the Soul, than helps it in its Operations: We are I say, chain'd down (as it were) to Flesh, and dinn'd and stupified with vaporous Blood; the Soul struggles to be releas'd, but struggles in vain till Death comes, and then she feels herself at Liberty, the Scales fall from her Eyes, then she has a clearer view of Things; she no longer peeps through the crannies of Sense, but gains an enlarg'd Prospect; a new and most amazing World discloses itself, a World we shall be better able to think and talk about when we get thither. Now what a solemn Thing is it to die? since Death not only dissolves our Bodies, and removes us from all these Worldly Things, but enters us on a new, and for the most part an unknown State.

Espe-

Especially if

4. We consider Death as a Passage to Judgment,----HEB. IX. 27. *'Tis appointed for all Men once to die, and after Death the Judgment.* And indeed what can be more reasonable, than that God the great Sovereign of all the World, who has made Man a free Creature, and given him Laws to be the Rule of his Actions, and intrusted him with various Talents, should call him to Account concerning his Regard to the Laws of his Maker, his husbanding the Talents where-with he has been intrusted.

II. And thus now I come to consider Death, as it relates to the Righteous and the Wicked respectively.

As these are very different in their Lives, so also with respect to their Deaths, or to speak more properly, with respect to what comes after Death.—In this World, the Righteous and Wicked, the Good and Bad, are mixt together, not only on the account

of their Place, but of their adverse or prosperous Circumstances; but Death makes a wide Separation betwixt them, as wide as the Distance between Heaven and Hell. When the Righteous Man dies, the attending Angels take care of his Soul, and convey it safe to the Paradise of God, there his Woes are all forgotten; his Sorrows drown'd in Rivers of Pleasure; he beholds God's Face and dwells in his Presence, admires his Glory, and sings his Praise. But 'tis time now that I consider the Death of the Wicked, and here I have a most dismal Scene indeed! nor should I care to disclose it, if 'twas not in hopes to awaken some wicked Wretch, and induce him to fly from the Wrath to come. God's Patience, the Scriptures assure us, towards the Wicked, ends with this Life: *The Wicked*, we read, *must be turned into Hell, and all the People that forget God*; that forget their Dependance upon him, their Obligations to him, and spend their Lives in Rebellion against him; and Lord! who can express the Horror and Anguish that this imply's? to be turn'd into Hell is to be for ever banish'd from the blisful Presence

of God; from the Mansions of Glory; to be strip'd of all Happiness, and plung'd into the deepest Misery; 'tis to fall a Prey to Devils; to dwell in Blackness of Darkness, and Flames unquenchable. This is the Portion of all that forget God, and the Hypocrite's Hope shall thus perish. And thus now I have from the Word of God, given you a short Account of the different aspect Death has upon the Righteous and the Wicked; to one 'tis the Messenger of the greatest Happiness; to the other, of the greatest Misery. And is it so?

Then

1. How much is it to be lamented, that the far greater Part of Mankind are so unaccountably stupid, and unconcern'd about their Disolution? How few are there that live as those that know not how soon they must die, and that believe when Death comes they must be judg'd for their Actions, and be sentenc'd to Heaven or Hell, according to their Works? How many are in a Sense, dead already? dead to God and Religion;

dead in Trespases and Sins; dead to all serious Thoughts of Death, and another World; they see one drop into the Grave after another; they feel the Symptoms of Death in themselves; they go to the Funerals of their Friends and Acquaintance; they sit and drink, and chat for two or three Hours together, about any Thing that comes in their Head; then they follow the Corps to the burying Place; see the Bones and Skulls, and broken Pieces of Coffins, strew'd about the Grave's Mouth; look on till their Neighbour is put into the Earth, and then they return home, as heedless of Death; as forgetful of God; as devoted to Sin and the World, as ever; never considering it might have been their Case, that 'twas God that made the difference, that the next time the Bell tolls may be for them, and that they are undone for ever, if Death finds them unprepared,

2. Is it so? Then let us examine what Preparation we have made for Death, whether we are among the Number of the Righteous

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teous or the Wicked; of such as are like to be Gainers or Losers by going into another World. 'Tis certain we can't stay here, our Life will vanish; our Time of Judgment come; our final State be shortly determin'd; and ought we not then to consider what is like to become of us? have we any Concern so weighty and pressing? and is it Wisdom then to be heedless about it? A Man that is about to go into a strange Country, will consider how he is prepared for his Journey, and how he is like to fare when he comes thither, and shall not we that are going to live for ever in another World take Care about our Journey, or about our Settlement there? and that when we know beforehand our well or ill being depends on our present Deportment.

3. Let us in the next Place be exhorted to improve the present Opportunity; to be humbled for our Sins; Pray for Grace and Pardon; cease to do Evil, learn to do well, and we shall then no longer have Cause to be afraid of Death; shall be absolv'd from

Guilt

Guilt, and God and Heaven shall be our Portion.

4. Let me next speak a Word by way of Consolation, to such as fear and serve God; you hear what a happy Change Death brings to such, wherefore let the Consideration of it be matter of your present Comfort and Joy. There's nothing more becoming than a chearful contented Frame of Spirit, you have cause to be Chearful, because you are truly Wise: Men may indeed be Wise for this World, they may have Politick Heads, profound Learning, and witty Invention, may know how to gain Riches, Esteem, and Honour; but how little does this signify, if they are Slaves to their Lusts; Vain and Wicked in Heart and Life; how little, I say, does it signify, since Death is coming to strip them of all these fine Accomplishments, and hurry them away to Darknes and Misery? so that how little do such deserve the Name of Wise? how little Cause have they to be Chearfull? but as for those who love God; who have made Religion their Choice; whose Corruptions are dying;

and

and who labour after greater Degrees of Purity and Virtue; how Chearful, how contented should they be? considering what an Interest they have in another World, and that even Death, the worst of Evils, will prove advantageous. Lift up then the Head that hangs down; strengthen the feeble Knees; look like the Son of a King, and maintain a chearful thankful Heart; encourage thy self more in God and Grace, more confirm'd in Religion and Virtue.

III. Let us from the shortness of Life, and what comes after Death, be excited to greater Moderation towards these Wordly Things.

This is a Caution that most of us needs very much; Men are apt to be excessively fond of Worldly Enjoyments, and excessively eager in the Pursuit of them, and excessively troubled at the loss or want of them; why is this but for want of considering how near they are to the Grave? and that there are greater Evils to be avoided, and greater Goods to be obtain'd than any in this World?

If

If we are in never so good Circumstances here, Death will soon blast them ; if in never so bad, we shall soon be releas'd from them. What Reason therefore have we to be more moderate? A Man that lives in an hired House that he must shortly be turn'd out of, thinks it not worth his while to be at much Cost and Pains about repairing and beautifying it. He that is on a Journey thro' a strange Country, if the Country be pleasant, he is not much transported with it, because he knows he is not to settle there, and if 'tis rugged and barren he is not much concern'd about it, because he knows he shall soon get over it ; now this is a Resemblance of our Case here, we dwell in Houses of Clay ; we are but Strangers and Pilgrims upon Earth ; how little Cause therefore have we to be mighty Sollicitous about our Houses of Clay, and the Circumstances of our Journey? — When *Alexander* had conquer'd a great Part of the World, he came to an Island of the *Brachmans*, a Sort of Philosophers that were extremely mortified to the World, that liv'd in Caves, cloathed themselves in Beasts Skins, and fed on what the

Earth

Earth produc'd, without any Care of their own. *Alexander* demanding the Reason of this Way of living, which seem'd so strange to him; they answer'd, we know that we shall die, whether this Day or To-morrow we know not, and why therefore should we take care for Power to Rule; Honour to be Esteem'd; or Riches to live in Pleasure. He was so affected with this Answer, that he bid them ask what they would and he would give it: They presently demanded not to die; to which he replied, that he could not give that, for he himself must die; why then said they, art thou so foolish to live in such Pride and Luxury. The Application of this Story is easy certainly, since we not only know we must shortly die, but be lodg'd in Heaven or Hell; we have abundant Cause to take the Apostle's Advice,---PHIL. iv. 5. *Let your Moderation be known unto all Men, for the LORD is at Hand.*

F I N I S

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